

Message Text

PAGE 01 SEOUL 02890 01 OF 02 241026Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

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SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 SAM-01 OMB-01 CU-02 /079 W

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P 240847Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9672

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 2890/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR KS US

SUBJECT: ROKG STEP UP RESTRICTIVE INTERNAL MEASURES

SUMMARY: IN RECENT WEEKS THE PAK GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF RESTRICTIVE MEASURES WHICH HAVE REVERSED GENERALLY MODERATE TREND PREVAILING SINCE LATE FALL. THESE STEPS CLEARLY REFLECT PAK'S IRRITATION OVER FAILURE OF EARLY TREND TO PLACATE HIS CRITICS AND HIS BELIEF THAT WORLD SITUATION REQUIRES MORE AUTHORITARIAN MEASURES AT HOME. ALSO INVOLVED SEEMS TO BE A GROWING CONVICTION THAT ROKG SHOULD PAY LESS ATTENTION TO US CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION. HINTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN AIRED ON ADDITIONAL CURBS IN STATE SECURITY LAW AREA AND ON RELIGIOUS GROUPS WORKING AMONG URBAN POOR. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING PAST MONTH, THE PAK GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF RESTRICTIVE INTERNAL STEPS WHICH CLEARLY REVERSED THE GENERALLY MODERATE TREND WHICH HAD PREVAILED SINCE THE LATE FALL. AMONG THESE MOVES WERE THE PASSAGE OF THE ANTI-SLANDER LAW, THE REARREST OF POET KIM CHI-HA AND HIS LAWYER HAN SUNG-KON, THE CLOSURE AND MILITARY OCCUPATION OF KORYO UNIVERSITY THROUGH EMERGENCY MEASURE 7, THE ARREST OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES LEADER KIM KWAN-SOK AND SOME CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SEOUL 02890 01 OF 02 241026Z

OF HIS COLLEAGUES, AND SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED EXECUTION OF EIGHT PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY PRISONERS, WHILE EACH OF THESE MOVES WAS AIMED AT SPECIFIC OPPOSITION PROBLEM AREA FOR ROKG, THEY FORM PATTERN

WHICH REFLECTS PAK'S GROWING ANGER TOWARD OPPOSITION IN GENERAL AND HIS FEAR THAT ROK NWO FACES VIETNAM-TYPE SITUATION WHICH MUST BE DEALT WITH BY TIGHT DISCIPLINE AT HOME.

2. PAK EVIDENTLY BELIEVED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM AND THE RELEASE OF THE EMERGENCY MEASURES PRISONERS WOULD SERVE TO MOLLIFY THE OPPOSITION AND WIN HIM PLAUDITS BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. WHEN NEITHER RESULT TRANSPIRED, HE REACTED WITH VEHEMENCE. (DRP POLICY CHAIRMAN PAK CHUN-KYU, WHO HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT, EMPHASIZES THIS ASPECT OF THE RECENT CRACK-DOWN). THE LESSONS PAK HAS DRAWN FROM INDOCHINA, MAGNITUDE OF THE SECOND NORTH KOREAN TUNNEL, AND KIM IL-SUNG'S VISIT TO PEKING ARE ALL PLAYING A ROLE IN SHAPING PAK'S TOUGHER STANCE. TO SOME EXTENT, PAK MAY WELL BE USING INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO JUSTIFY MOVES HE WOULD HAVE MADE IN ANY CASE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS FEARS ABOUT THE FUTURE SEEM TO BE GENUINE, AS DOES HIS BELIEF THAT LESS OPPOSITION AND MORE AUTHORITARIANISM ARE THE MEANS TO STRENGTHENING THE ROK.

3. PAK MAY ALSO HAVE REACHED CONSCIOUS DECISION TO PAY LESS ATTENTION TO US PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. PAK SEEMS INCREASINGLY TO FEEL THAT HE NEVER WILL BE ABLE TO FULLY SATISFY HIS CRITICS IN THE US AND THAT IT WOULD UNDERMINE HIS CONTROL TO TRY TO DO SO. THE VISIT OF CONGRESSMAN FRASER GAVE SOME INSIGHT INTO PAK'S THINKING ALONG THESE LINES. FOREGOING AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY TO PRESENT HIS CASE TO THE CONGRESSMAN, PAK POINTEDLY REFUSED TO SEE HIM. AT THE SAME TIME PAK MAY HAVE BEEN DISPLAYING HIS OPINION OF CONGRESSIONAL VIEWS WHEN ROKG AUTHORITIES ARRESTED KIM KWAN-SOK, THE DAY FOLLOWING THE LATTER'S LUNCH WITH CONGRESSMAN FRASER. THERE IS ALSO GENERAL FEELING THAT ABRUPT EXECUTION OF THE PRP PRISONERS WAS TO SOME EXTENT A REACTION TO FOREIGN CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SEOUL 02890 01 OF 02 241026Z

ATTEMPTS TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT ON PRP PRISONER ISSUE.

4. IN ADDITION TO PAK'S GREATER WILLINGNESS TO IGNORE US PUBLIC OPINION, WE DETECT A SUSPICION ON THE PART OF THE BLUE HOUSE THAT THE USG IS SOMEHOW IN SYMPATHY WITH OPPOSITION'S DESIRE TO DUMP THE PRESIDENT. PAK CHUN-KYU POINTEDLY HINTED AT THIS SUSPICION WHEN IN DISCUSSION OF CURRENT EVENTS HE TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT THE ARMY WOULD HAVE COME TO SYNGMAN RHEE'S SUPPORT IN APRIL 1960 HAD IT NOT BEEN CLEAR THAT THE USG WANTED HIM TO STEP DOWN. RUMORS HAVE ALSO BEEN CIRCULATING AROUND TOWN THAT

THE US EMBASSY IS BEHIND THE CURRENT EFFORTS TO FORM A UNITED OPPOSITION PARTY. THESE RUMORS ARE EVIDENTILY OF GOVERNMENT ORIGIN. A ROKG OFFICIAL INFORMED AN EMBOFF THAT THE KCIA HELD A BRIEFING FOR VARIOUS OFFICIALS AT WHICH IT WAS CLAIMED THAT THE OPPOSITION UNIFICATION MOVE HAD BEEN SPURRED BY THE US TO CREATE A DEMOCRATIC ATMOSPHERE IN KOREA WHICH THE US HAD FELT WAS LACKING IN VIETNAM.

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 02890 02 OF 02 241033Z

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P 240847Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9673

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SEOUL 2890/2

5. THERE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH IN THE REACTION AT HOME THAT WOULD PERSUADE PAK THAT HE IS TURNING SCREWS IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. CHURCH GROUTS HAVE IN GENERAL RESPONDED RATHER MEEKLY, AND HAVE REACTED WITH DISUNITY TO ARREST OF KIM KWAN-SOK.

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND EMERGENCY MEASURE 7 HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT OF SILENCING THE STUDENTS WITHOUT LEADING, SO FAR, TO ANY VIOLENT REACTION. FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APRIL STUDENT REVOLUTION PASSED VIRTUALLY WITHOUT INCIDENT. THE REACTION OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAS ALSO NOT GIVEN THE BLUE HOUSE MUCH CAUSE TO DOUBT EFFECACY OF ITS TOUGHER STANCE,BEING CONFINED MAINLY TO SPORADIC DENUCIATIONS WHICH DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC. NOR HAVE THE INCIPIENT MOVES TOWARD A UNIFIED OPPOSITION ACHIEVED MUCH PROGRESS IN THE FACE OF EXPECTED SQUABBLES OVER LEADERSHIP SLOTS AND LOCAL ORGANIZATION.

6. AT THE SAME TIME, THE OPPOSITION'S PERFORMANCE DURING THE APRIL 19 ANNIVERSARY MAY HAVE FURTHER CONVINCED PAK THAT, INEFFECTUAL AS THE POLITICIANS ARE, THEY ARE STILL BASICALLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND INIMICAL TO HIS INTERESTS. BOTH YUN PO-SON AND KIM YONG-SAM, FOR EXAMPLE, TRIED DURING THEIR

APRIL 19 SPEECHES TO BUILD INTO A NATIONAL POLITICAL
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 02890 02 OF 02 241033Z

HERO AN SNU AGRICULTURAL STUDENT WHO COMMITTED HARA
KIRI DURING RECENT DEMONSTRATION IN SUWON. THIS
ATTEMPT TO MAKE POLITICAL HAY OUT OF A TRAGEDY FOR
WHICH GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE BLAMED WOULD NOT SEEM TO
ENHANCE THE BLUE HOUSE VIEW OF EITHER POLITICIAN.
THAT THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE STUDENT DEATH HAS BEEN
SO FAR MUTED ONLY SERVES TO MAKE YUN'S AND KIM'S EFFORTS
SEEM THAT MUCH MORE STRAINED.

7. REGARDING FURTHER RESTRICTIVE STEPS IN THE NEAR
FUTURE, WE HAVE REPORTED SEPARATELY ROKG PLANS TO
ADOPT IN MAY A BILL PERMITTING THE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP
CLOSE TABS ON RELEASED PRISONERS WHO HAD BEEN CONVICTED
OF VIOLATING STATE SECURITY OR ANTI-COMMUNIST LAWS.
WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SUCH A BILL WOULD NOT BE
BROADENED SO AS TO ALLOW MORE STRINGENT APPLICATIN
OF THE TWO LATTER LAWS TO ORDINARY CITIZENS, ALTHOUGH
THE NEWSPAPERS HAVE RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY. ANOTHER MOVE
WHICH THE ROKG SEEMS TO BE CONSIDERING AT THIS STAGE
IS AN EFFORT TO CURB CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONAL WORK
AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL POOR. PAK CHUN-KYU HAS BEEN
QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE
URBAN INDUSTRIAL MISSION (UIM), WHICH IS ACTIVE IN
THIS FIELD. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE DEALING WITH LABOR HAS INSISTED TO US THAT
THE UIM IS "LEFT-WING" WHILE HIGH-LEVEL KOREAN
GOVERNMENT FIGURES HAVE BRANDED CHRISTIANS WORKING IN
THE URBAN FIELD AS "COMMUNIST" EVANGELISTS. ALTHOUGH
SPECIFIC STEPS ARE BY NO MEANS CLEAR AT THIS JUNCTURE,
THE GOVERNMENT IS THUS EXPRESSING HEIGHTENED CONCERN
OVER THE POTENTIAL FOR URBAN UNREST AND MAY BE
PREPARING TOUGH MOVES AGAINST THOSE ELEMENTS SHOWING
INTEREST IN URBAN ORGANIZATION.

8. WE HESITATE TO PREDICT WHETHER RESTRICTIONS WILL
INCREASE OVER THE LONGER RUN, PARTICULARLY SINCE
TRADITIONALLY PAK'S POLICIES IN THIS AREA IN
THE PAST HAVE RESEMBLED A PENDULUM WITH A FAIRLY SHORT
SWING. OUR CONCERN, HOWEVER, IS THAT WITH HIS SIEGE
MENTALITY ENHANCED BY INDOCHINESE EVENTS AND IRRITATED
BY WHAT HE SEES AS STUBBORNESS OF THE OPPOSITION,
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PAGE 03 SEOUL 02890 02 OF 02 241033Z

PAK MAY FEEL THAT AUTHORITARIANISM WILL PROVIDE THE
ONLY KEY TO INTERNAL STABILITY.
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